

HOMICIDE

**IN
CALIFORNIA
2004**



Bill Lockyer, Attorney General
California Department of Justice
Division of California Justice Information Services
Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis
CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS CENTER

HOMICIDE IN CALIFORNIA, 2004

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Bill Lockyer, Attorney General

DIVISION OF CALIFORNIA JUSTICE INFORMATION SERVICES

Nick Dedier, Director/CIO

Doug Smith, Deputy Director

BUREAU OF CRIMINAL INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Jack Scheidegger, Assistant Chief

CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS CENTER

Steve Galeria, Statistical Analysis Center

Chris Bucher, Statistical Data Center

HOMICIDE IN CALIFORNIA, 2004

David Guon, Analyst

Umash Prasad, Editor

Tad Davis, Graphics & Design

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tricia Clark, Analyst

Marie Herbert, Analyst

Adele Spears, Analyst

Debra Callahand, Technician

Roger Decker, Technician

Carol Heckle, Technician

Donna Isley, Technician

Cathy McKee, Technician

Penny Miles, Technician

Mayra Morales, Technician

Wisdom Ofoe, Technician

Toni Rose, Technician

Cynthia Souza, Technician

Mimi Stennett, Technician

Robin Tipton, Technician

Carly Wilson, Technician

Gerald Young, Technician

The role of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center is to:

- Collect, analyze, and report statistical data which provide valid measures of crime and the criminal justice process.
- Examine these data on an ongoing basis to better describe crime and the criminal justice system.
- Promote the responsible presentation and use of crime statistics.

Narrative

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Homicide in California, 2004 contains information about the crime of homicide and its victims, demographic data on persons arrested for homicide, and information about the response of the criminal justice system. Information about the death penalty, the number of peace officers killed in the line of duty, and justifiable homicide is also included. Additionally, this year's edition of *Homicide in California* includes an expanded analysis of domestic violence-related homicide (see pages 21 through 23).

Information displayed in this publication comes from several databases maintained by the California Department of Justice (DOJ). The primary source of information is the Homicide File, which captures willful and justifiable homicide crime data. Other databases capture information about persons arrested for homicide, death penalty sentences, and peace officers killed in the line of duty. The reader should consider that the type of data collected, and the methods used to collect these data, differ for each data set. *Unless otherwise indicated, all calculations are based on the number of known incidents.*

To provide the most valid data possible, the disposition section of this report has been removed. In 2001, Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC) staff determined that a number of homicide arrests submitted to the DOJ's Automated Criminal History System (from which adult felony arrest disposition data are extracted) from 1997 to 2001 should have been submitted as arrests for attempted homicide. In addition, some correctly submitted attempted homicide arrests were programmatically treated as homicide arrests. As a result, more homicide arrests were counted during these years than occurred. This caused the percentage of homicide convictions to be too low and the percentage of assault convictions to be too high. (Both percentages were based on the number of adult felony arrests for homicide for which dispositions were received.) Based on CJSC staff findings, the reader is advised against using previously published disposition data from 1997 to 1999. It should be noted that the DOJ has addressed this issue and that the exclusion of disposition data does not affect crime, arrest, death penalty, nor other data included in this or past reports. When homicide disposition data are once again determined to be accurate, they will be included in this publication.

Beginning in 2004, the population estimates used to calculate rates are based on revisions of the 2000 census. For 2003 and earlier, these population estimates were based on revisions of the 1990 census. Readers are advised to exercise care in interpreting changes in percent and rates between decennial census samples, as these census samples are statistically independent and measure two different populations at two different points in time. In addition, the "Other" population category now includes the new race/ethnic group of "Multi-racial." The extent to which this new race/ethnic group affects other population estimates is not known.

CJSC publications available in either printed or electronic format (via the Attorney General's website) are listed on the inside of the back cover. Customized statistical reports or additional statistical information may be requested by contacting the CJSC at the numbers or addresses provided there.

HIGHLIGHTS

HOMICIDE CRIMES (see pages 2-23)

- ✓ From 1995 to 2004, the homicide crime rate decreased 40.9 percent (11.0 to 6.5). From 2003 to 2004, homicide crimes decreased 3.0 percent in rate per 100,000 population (6.7 to 6.5). (Source: Table 1.)
- ✓ Since 1995, homicide rates have declined considerably for both males and females (36.8 and 42.1 percent, respectively). (Source: Table 2.)
- ✓ Since 1995, the homicide rate for victims aged 18-29 has consistently been the highest of any age group. (Source: Table 4.)
- ✓ A greater percentage of white victims were female than were Hispanic or black victims. White victims tended to be older, Hispanic and black victims, younger. (Sources: Tables 8 and 9.)
- ✓ In 2004, where the victim-offender relationship was known, nearly one-half (48.5 percent) of the victims were killed by friends or acquaintances. (Source: Table 12.)
- ✓ Of the 35 counties for which 2004 homicide rates were calculated, San Francisco County experienced the highest rate per 100,000 population (11.1); San Luis Obispo County experienced the lowest (0.8). (Source: Table 14.)
- ✓ From 1995 to 2004, the average number of homicides committed during the summer exceeded the average number committed during any other season. (Source: Table 15.)
- ✓ In 2004, for all race/ethnic groups, the highest average daily number of homicides occurred on weekends. (Source: Table 16.)
- ✓ In 2004, where the contributing circumstance was known, 42.7 percent of homicides were the result of an argument. (Source: Table 24.)

HOMICIDE ARRESTS (see pages 26-29)

- ✓ From 1995 to 2004, the homicide arrest rate decreased 37.5 percent (11.2 to 7.0). From 2003 to 2004, homicide arrests increased 6.1 percent in rate per 100,000 population at risk (6.6 to 7.0). (Source: Table 29.)
- ✓ From 1995 to 2004, the overwhelming majority of homicide arrestees and victims were male. (Sources: Tables 5 and 30.)
- ✓ From 1995 to 2004, the largest percentage of homicide arrestees and victims were Hispanic. (Sources: Tables 6 and 31.)
- ✓ From 1995 to 2004, the largest percentage of homicide arrestees and victims were aged 18-29. (Sources: Tables 7 and 32.)

DEATH PENALTY SENTENCES (see pages 32-33)

- ✓ By the end of 2004, there were 642 persons under sentence of death in California. Of these, 12 were sentenced in 2004. (Source: Table 35.)

PEACE OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY (see pages 36-37)

- ✓ Since 1995, there have been 55 peace officers feloniously killed in the line of duty. Four were killed in 2004. (Source: Table N-2.)
- ✓ Between 1995 and 2004, the homicide rate for peace officers killed in the line of duty varied from 2.9 to 16.1 per 100,000 sworn law enforcement personnel. (Source: Table 37.)